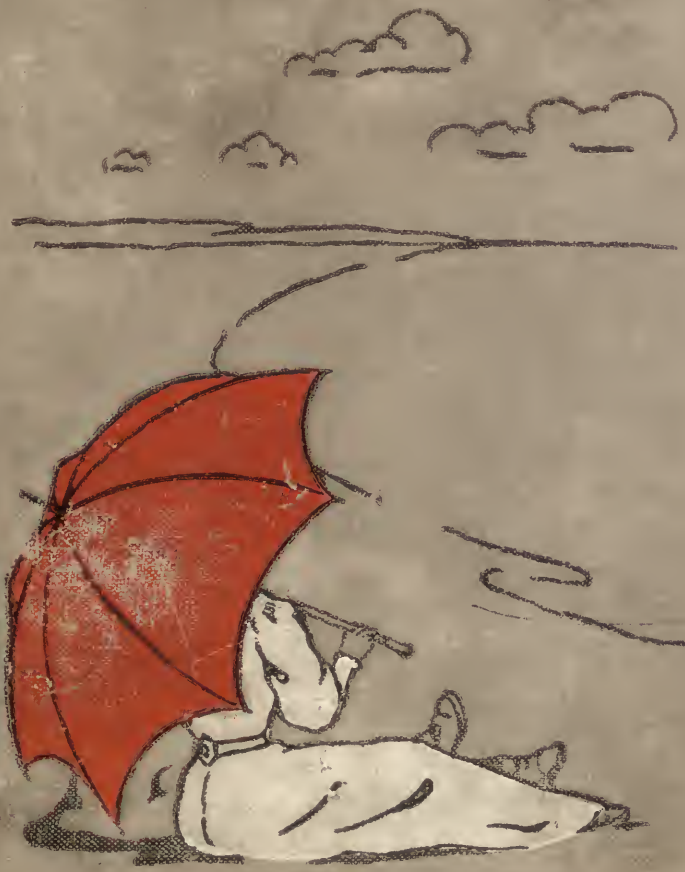

The Widow

TO SAY NOTHING OF THE MAN

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THE WIDOW

"OH well, I was only showing you the sugar bowl."

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THE WIDOW

[TO SAY NOTHING OF THE MAN]

BY HELEN ROWLAND
ILLUSTRATED BY
ESTHER P. HILL

DODGE PUBLISHING COMPANY
220 EAST 23D STREET, NEW YORK

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[THE WIDOW. 3]

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I

The Widow.

"WHAT would you say," asked the widow, tucking her skirts cautiously about her patent leather toes and leaning back luxuriously against the variegated pillows, "if I should tell you that I have found the very girl who would make you a model wife?"

The bachelor glanced up indifferently and dipped the paddle lazily into the water.

"What model?" he asked, suspiciously. "Women are like automobiles, you know. There are so many models. And even after you have selected one most carefully you never can tell what it is going to do."

"They are more like horses," declared the widow, "if you know how to handle them, and are gentle and kind——"

"And let them see you're master——"

"And don't jab them with spiteful little spurs——"

"And know when to pull on the curb——"

"And when to coax them with sugar——"

"And when to beat 'em—and even then you can't tell what they're going to shy at or balk at any more than you can tell when an automobile is going to break down or run away or blow up. But this 'model'—is she pretty and fetching and warranted to run smoothly over rough roads and to climb all the matrimonial hills

and not puncture a tire in the finances and to be just as good for a long run as for a spurt? Is she smart looking and substantial and——"

The widow sat up so quickly that the canoe swayed unsteadily beneath them.

"She's not a harem, Mr. Travers!" she cried. "Oh, dear!" she sighed hopelessly, leaning back again, "why is it that every man expects to get a harem of virtues combined in one wife? I don't believe any man but Solomon was ever perfectly satisfied with domestic life."

"Solomon," remarked the bachelor, giving the paddle an emphatic shove, "understood the necessity for variety in wives. But if Solomon had lived in the twentieth century he wouldn't have needed so many—

er—annexations. He would have got it all in one modern woman. Now, you, for instance——"

"Speaking impersonally," interrupted the widow, trying to look austere and at the same time to blow a chiffon veil out of her mouth, "when a man buys an automobile he selects a runabout or a victoria or a touring car or a racing machine, according to his needs, and is satisfied."

"Not at all," protested the bachelor. "The moment he has one automobile he is sighing for another, and he is never happy until he has a garage full——"

"And it is the same about a coat or a hat," persisted the widow, ignoring the interruption; "he picks out what suits him best; but he doesn't expect

his top hat to do him for picnics nor his swallow-tail to serve for lawn tennis nor his yachting cap to look well in church nor——"

"A derby," interrupted the bachelor, "will do almost anywhere."

"They're hideous, Mr. Travers! and stiff and commonplace and uncomfortable and——"

"Are they anything like the model wife you've picked out for me?" inquired the bachelor insinuatingly.

The widow flushed under the corner of her chiffon veil.

"Well," she acquiesced unwillingly, "she isn't particularly pretty nor brilliant and fascinating, and all that; but she's just the kind of a girl a man ought to marry."

"And never does!" finished the bachelor triumphantly, backing

water and turning the canoe for mid-stream. "Of all kinds of women a man detests——"

"How many kinds of women are there?" cried the widow suddenly.

"How many women are there?" retorted the bachelor. "The variety is only limited by the number of feminine individuals. But fundamentally they can be divided into two classes, just as automobiles can be divided into gasoline and electric. There is the woman a man wants to marry, the kind that is stamped from birth for wifehood, the even-tempered, steady-going, comfortable kind of girl that you would like to tie to for life and with whom you know you would be perfectly contented—and utterly stupid. Every man has in mind his ideal wife; and

nearly every man's ideal is of the calm, domestic, wholly good, wholly sweet sort, the sort that seems like a harbor away from the storm. But so often, just about as he has found this ideal, or before he has found her and before the sun of his summer day dream has risen the storm comes along——"

"The—what?"

"The tumultuous, impossible, adorable, unfathomable woman — the woman who may be good or bad, ugly or beautiful, but is always fascinating, alluring and irresistable. And she wrecks his little summer day dream and turns his snug harbor into a roaring whirlpool and carries him off in a tempest. Sometimes he marries her and sometimes he doesn't; but whether he does or does not, he

is always spoiled for the other kind afterward."

"And if he does marry her," added the widow, trailing her fingers thoughtfully in the water, "he is always sorry and wishing he had married the other kind."

"Well," the bachelor laid his paddle across his knee, "what's the difference? If he had married the other kind he would always have been wishing he hadn't. Now if a man could only be allowed two wives——"

"One for week days and one for—holidays?" inquired the widow sarcastically.

"Yes," acquiesced the bachelor, "one for each side of him, the tame side and the untamed side. One to serve as a harbor and make him a

home and fulfill his domestic longings and bring up his children and keep him sane and moral; and the other to amuse him and entertain him and inspire him and put the trimmings on life and the spice and flavor in the matrimonial dish."

"A sedative and a stimulant!" jeered the widow. "One to stir you up and one to calm you down; one to spur you forward and one to pull on the curb—a Hebe and a Minerva! And then you'd be running around demanding a Venus to make you forget the other two. Whatever woman a man marries, he invariably spends his life sighing for something different. If he is tied to a nice, soft sofa pillow, he longs for a backbone. If he marries a parlor ornament, he yearns for a kitchen utensil. If his

wife has a Greek nose, he discovers afterward that what he really admires is pugs. If he picks out red hair or black, he will go blocks out of his way to pursue every yellow glint that catches his eye. And if he married a whole harem at once he would discover that what he really wanted was monogamy, and a single wife with a single idea. There aren't enough kinds of women in the world to fulfill any one man's idea of what a wife should be."

"And yet," sighed the bachelor, "I once knew a woman who would have done that—all by herself."

The widow looked unconvinced.

"Was she a model wife?" she inquired, skeptically.

"How do I know?" said the bachelor. "She wasn't my wife."

"Of course not!" cried the widow. "It is always the other man's wife who is our ideal——"

"She wasn't my ideal," protested the bachelor. "She was the storm that shattered my ideal and spoiled me for matrimony. She was a whole garage, a whole stable, a whole harem in one."

The widow looked distinctly disapproving.

"It's lucky," she said coldly, "that you escaped—a woman like—that!"

"But I haven't," protested the bachelor, laying down his paddle and leaning forward so that the ends of the widow's chiffon veil blew in his face. "She was the spice in life's pudding, the flavor, the sauce, the stimulant, the——"

"This canoe is tipping dreadfully,"

remarked the widow, but the disapproval had disappeared from her eyes.

"She was——"

"Why, I do believe it's growing dark, Mr. Travers."

"It is," agreed the bachelor. "Nobody can see——"

"See—what?" asked the widow, suddenly sitting up straight and fixing the bachelor with her eyes.

"How perfectly adorable and unfathomable and tumultuous——"

"Are you feeding me sugar, Mr. Travers?"

"Perhaps," acknowledged the bachelor, leaning back and picking up the paddle again, "but some day, when I'm ready, I'm going to stop feeding you sugar. I'm going to put on the curb bit."

"Why don't you do it now—Billy?" asked the widow, with a challenging glance from beneath her lashes.

"I can't," grumbled the bachelor, "while you are blowing that chiffon veil."

The widow took the two ends of the offensive thing and tied them deliberately under her chin.

"Some day," continued the bachelor, as he swung the canoe shoreward with a vigorous dip of the paddle, I'm going to show you who's master. I'm going to marry you and then—"

"Be sorry!" laughed the widow.

"Of course," assented the bachelor, "but I'd be sorrier—if I didn't."

II

The Winning Card?

"THERE" said the bachelor as he bowed to a little man across the room, "sits the eighth wonder of the world—a man with a squint and a cork leg and no income to speak of, who has just married for the third time. What makes us so fascinating?"

The widow laid down her oyster fork and gazed thoughtfully at the beautiful girl in blue chiffon sitting opposite the man with the squint.

"Don't generalize," she said, turning rebukingly to the bachelor. "You mean what makes the little man so fascinating?"

The bachelor jabbed an oyster viciously.

"Well," he grumbled, "what does make him so fascinating? Is it the squint or the cork——"

The widow looked at him reproachfully.

"Don't be envious," she said. "He might have two squints and yet be successful with women. Haven't you ever seen a runty, plain little man before, with nothing on earth, apparently, to recommend him except his sex, who could draw the women as a magnet does needles?"

The bachelor dropped his oyster and stared at the widow.

"It's hypnotism!" he declared with solemn conviction.

The widow laughed.

"It's nothing of the sort," she con-

tradicted. "It's because he holds man's winning card and knows how to play it. Just observe the tender solicitude with which he consults her about that fish."

"You mean," inquired the bachelor suspiciously, "that he has a fascinating way?"

"That's all he needs," responded the widow promptly, "to make him irresistible."

"Then, how do you account," argued the bachelor, indicating a Gibsonesque young man eating his dinner alone under a palm at the corner table, "for the popularity of that Greek god over there? He's a perfect boor, yet the women in this hotel pet him and coax him and cuddle him as if he were a prize lion cub."

"Oh," remarked the widow, "if you were all Greek gods—that would be different. But, unfortunately, the average man is just an ungainly looking thing in a derby hat and hideous clothes, with knuckly hands and padded shoulders and a rough chin."

"Thank you," said the bachelor sweetly. "I see—as in a looking glass. Evidently our countenances—"

"Pooh!" jeered the widow, "your countenances just don't count. That's all. What profiteth it a man though he have the face of an Appollo if he have the legs of a Caliban? A woman never bothers about a man's face. It's his figure that attracts her. She will forgive weak eyes and a cut-off chin twice as quickly as weak shoulders and cut-off legs."

"That's why we pad them—the

shoulders," explained the bachelor.

"You wouldn't need to," retorted the widow, "if you knew how to play the winning card."

"What IS the winning card?" implored the bachelor, leaning across the table anxiously.

The widow laid down her soup spoon and bent to arrange the violets in her belt meditatively.

"Well," she said, "Sir Walter Raleigh played it and it won him a title; and Mr. Mantellini played it and it kept him in spending money and fancy waistcoats for years without his doing a stroke of work; and Louis XIV.—but oh, pshaw! You know all about that. Briefly speaking, a man's winning card is his knowledge of how to treat a woman. Specific-

ally, it is a tender, solicitous, protecting manner. A woman just loves to be 'protected,' whether there is anything to be protected from or not. She loves to know that you are anxious for her safety and comfort, even when there is no cause in the world for your anxiety. She loves to have you wait on her, even when there is a room full of hired waiters about. She loves to be treated like an adorable, cunning, helpless child, even when she is five feet ten and weighs a cool two hundred. She delights in having a mental cloak laid down for her to walk over and every time you do it she secretly knights you."

"It sounds awfully easy," said the bachelor.

"But it isn't," retorted the widow, "if it were all men would try it—and

all men would be perfectly irresistible."

"Well, aren't they?" asked the bachelor, innocently. "I thought they——"

"The winning way, the irresistible masculine manner," pursued the widow, ignoring the interruption, "is something subtle and inborn. It can't be put on or varnished over. It is neither a pose nor a patent. It is the gift of one of the good fairies at birth. If it is going to be trained into a man he must be caught and schooled very early—say, before he is ten years old. It's his ingrain attitude toward women and he begins by practicing it on his mother. If he is not to the manner born and tries to cultivate it late in life, he must watch very carefully to see that he does not overdo

it like a lackey or a dancing master or the villain in a melodrama. Of course, it can be cultivated to a certain extent, like music or Christian Science, but it's hard for a man to learn that a woman is a fragile creature and needs a bodyguard, after he has been twenty years letting his sisters pack their own trunks and lug their own satchels and golf clubs. Besides, most men are too busy or too self-absorbed to cultivate it, if they could."

"Most men," remarked the bachelor, stirring his coffee and lighting his cigarette, "aren't anxious to become the sort of 'mother's darling' you describe."

"Nonsense," retorted the widow. "Richard the Third was a perfectly adorable ladies' man and he couldn't

be called exactly—a 'mother's darling.' Yet the things he said to poor Lady Anne and the way he said them would have turned any feminine brain. It isn't milk and water that women admire; it's the milk of human interest. It's the feeling that a man is gazing at you instead of through you at his own reflection—or some other woman."

"But if it means giving up all the easy chairs," protested the bachelor, "and packing all the family trunks and putting out your pipe every time a female member of the family approaches and eating dishes you don't want and running round doing household errands, a man hasn't got time——"

"It doesn't!" declared the widow. "It has nothing to do with morals or

with selfishness. Some of the most selfish men in the world are those whom a poor little woman will work her fingers to the bone to support, simply because when she comes home at night after her labors her husband puts his arms around her and tells her how sad it makes him feel to see her struggle so, and how young and beautiful she keeps in spite of it all and orders her to lie down and let him run out and fetch her some ice-cream and read to her. A man with that sort of way with him can get anything on earth out of a woman and then make her eternally grateful to him. Look at the husbands who slave all day earning money for their wives to spend and go home tired out and grouchy and never get a word of thanks. Yet, a man can stay out six

nights in the week, and if he will come home on the seventh with a kiss and a compliment and a box of candy and any old lie and a speech about sympathy and all that, a nice sensible wife will forgive and forget—and adore him."

"But are there any nice sensible wives?" asked the bachelor plaintively.

"Have you finished your cigarette, Mr. Travers?" inquired the widow coolly.

"Because if there are, that is just what I am looking——"

"If you have," pursued the widow, "I think we had better go."

The bachelor rose with alacrity.

"I think so, too," he acquiesced, pleasantly. "That Greek god over yonder under the palm has been star-

"THAT Greek god has been staring as if he contemplated murder."

ing at me as if he contemplated murder for the last half hour."

The widow blushed.

"Perhaps," she said with a one-cornered smile, "he is envying you——"

"Undoubtedly!" agreed the bachelor.

"Envying you," pursued the widow, "your fascinating ways."

"Oh," cried the bachelor, "then I have got it."

"What?" said the widow.

"The winning card. The charm!"

"Well," said the widow, putting her head on the side and gazing at him speculatively, "you wear a derby hat."

"I take it off in the house and in the presence of ladies," protested the bachelor.

"And your shoulders——" began the widow.

"They are my own!" declared the bachelor.

"And your——"

"They also are mine," broke in the bachelor quickly.

"And besides all that," added the widow, "you have that little bald spot in the middle of your head. And yet——"

"Go on," said the bachelor, "you have said the worst."

"I broke an engagement with a nice boy to dine with you to-night."

"That doesn't prove anything," said the bachelor scornfully. "Maybe he hasn't played the winning card."

"No, it proves you have," declared the widow.

"I can't see it!" protested the bachelor.

"Well, just look at the Greek god over under the palm and then look in the glass at yourself and—work it out."

"But why look at the Greek god?"

"Because," said the widow, turning to the mirror and carefully tilting her hat, "he is the nice boy with whom I broke the engagement."

III

WHY?

"WHY is a woman?" snapped the bachelor, flinging himself into the big armchair opposite the widow with a challenging glance.

"Why—why, because," stammered the widow; startled at his sudden appearance.

"I knew it!" said the bachelor with conviction.

"And there are lots of other reasons, Mr. Travers."

"But they aren't reasonable," declared the bachelor doggedly.

The widow closed her book with a sigh and laid it on the table beside her.

"Who said they were?" she asked witheringly. "Neither is a woman. Being reasonable is so stupid. It's worse than being suitable or sensible, or—or proper."

The bachelor lifted his eyebrows in mild astonishment.

"I thought those were virtues," he protested.

"They are, Mr. Travers," returned the widow crushingly, "and that's why they're so uninteresting. You might as well ask why is music, or painting, or pâté de foie gras, or champagne, or ice cream, or anything else charming and delicious—"

"And utterly useless."

"Of course," agreed the widow, leaning back and thoughtfully twisting the bit of lace she called a handkerchief. "It's the utterly useless

things that make the world attractive and pleasant to live in—like flowers and bonbons and politics and love—"

"And tobacco," added the bachelor reflectively.

"Woman is the dessert to the feast," went on the widow, "the trimmings on the garment of life, the spice in the pudding. Of course, a man can eat his dinner without dessert or champagne and live his life without kisses or a woman—but somehow he never does."

"And that's just where he gets into trouble," retorted the bachelor promptly. "If you could only tell," he went on pathetically, "what any one of them was going to do or why she was going to do it, or——"

"Then it isn't 'Why *is* a woman?' but 'Why *does* a woman?' that you

wanted to know," interrupted the widow helpfully.

"That's it!" cried the bachelor, "why does she get off a car backward? Why does she wear a skirt four yards long and then get furious if you step on it? Why does she make a solemn and important engagement without the slightest intention of keeping it? Why does she put on open-work stockings and gaudy shoes and hold her frock as high as she dares—and then annihilate you if you stare at her? Why does she use everything as it was not intended to be used—a hairpin to pick a lock, a buttonhook to open a can, a hairbrush to hammer a nail, a hatpin to rob a letter box, a razor to sharpen a pencil and a cup and saucer to decorate the mantelpiece? Why

does she gush over the woman she hates worst and snub the man she is dying to marry? Why does she lick all the glue off a postage stamp and then try to make it stick? Why does she cry at a wedding and act frivolous at a funeral? Why does she put a new feather on her hat and a new kink in her hair, and expect a man to notice it as quickly and be as astonished as he would if she had shaved her head or lost a limb? Why does she seem offended if you don't make love to her, and then get angry if you do? Why does she act kittenish when she's big and dignified, when she's little and old, when she's young and silly, when she's old? And why, oh, why, did you inveigle me into coming down to this miserable pink-and-white house party with the hope of

being near you and then utterly ignore me and spend your time flirting with Bobby Taylor, while I sulk about like a lost sheep or run errands——"

"For Miss Manners?" suggested the widow cuttingly.

"Miss Manners!" exclaimed the bachelor scornfully.

"You once thought her very beautiful, Mr. Travers."

"That's just it!" retorted the bachelor. "Why didn't you let me go on thinking her beautiful——"

"'As delicate as a sea shell,' wasn't it?"

"Yes," snapped the bachelor, "and as hollow!"

The widow smiled enigmatically. "Tell me," she said sympathetically, "what she has done to you."

"Well, for one thing," complained the bachelor, "she coaxed me out on the piazza last night in the moonlight, and then, when she had talked sentiment for half an hour and lured me to a dark spot and simply goaded me into taking her hand——"

The widow sat up straight.

"But you didn't do it, Billy Travers!"

"Of course I did. It seemed almost an insult not to. And what did she do? She jerked it away, flung herself from me, rose like an outraged queen, turned on me with that 'I-thought-you-were-a-gentleman' air and said——"

The widow lay back in her chair and laughed.

"Oh, mercy!" she said, wiping the tears from her eyes when she was

able. "Excuse me but—but—how did she look when she did it?"

"Well," confessed the bachelor, "she did look rather stunning."

"That's why she did it," explained the widow between laughs. "A woman's reason for doing most things is because she thinks she will look well doing them."

"Or because she thinks you will look surprised if she does them."

"Or because she wants to attract your attention."

"Or to make you feel uncomfortable."

"Or to astonish you or amuse you or——"

"Work on your sensibilities, or get on your nerves, or play on your sympathies. But," he went on growing wroth at the recollection, "the

idea of a little chit like that—and that isn't the worst. This morning she dragged me out of bed at half-past five to go fishing. Fishing! At this season! I never saw a girl so crazy for fish in my life; and when we had walked four miles to find the right spot and she had been silent long enough for me to feel a nibble at the bait and had helped me with all her might and main to haul in that blessed little fish, do you know what she did?"

The widow looked up questioningly.

"She cried because I wanted to bring it home and made me throw it back into the water. That's what she did!"

The widow sat up straight, with horrified eyes.

"Well, of course she did!" she exclaimed heatedly. She only asked you to *catch* the fish didn't she—not to *kill* it?"

The bachelor stared at her for a moment without speaking. Then he got up silently and walked over to the window.

"I suppose," he remarked after a long pause, apparently addressing the front lawn or the blue heavens, "that it's that same sort of logic that incites a woman to play for a man until she catches him—and then throw him overboard. O Lord," he continued, glancing at the sky devoutly, "why couldn't you have made them nice and sensible?"

The widow took up her book with disdain.

" 'Nice and sensible' " she repeated

witheringly. "Just think how it would feel to be called 'nice and sensible!' I wish," she added, turning to her novel with an air of boredom, "that you would go and—talk to Ethel Manners."

The bachelor eyed her narrowly.

"I guess I will," he said finally. "She seems more interesting—now that you've explained her."

The widow stopped in the middle of a paragraph and looked up.

"And by Jove!" went on the bachelor reminiscently, turning to the window again, "she did look dreamy in a sunbonnet and that little short skirt this morning. She has adorable feet, you know."

The widow closed her book with a sharp snap, keeping her fingers between the pages.

"*I* know, Mr. Travers; but how did *you* know?"

"I looked at them," confessed the bachelor frankly, "and her ankles—"

The widow's mouth closed in a straight line.

"I'm afraid, Mr. Travers," she remarked frigidly, "that you are not a fit companion for a young girl like Ethel."

"I'm not equal to her," grinned the bachelor.

"No, you're not. She's a nice, sensible girl and——"

"Do you hate her very much?"

"Hate her?" The widow's eyes opened with astonishment.

"You called her 'nice and sensible,'"

"Bobby Taylor's looking for you,

Marion," called Miss Manners, glancing in at the door suddenly.

"Well, goodby. I'm off," said the bachelor, following the swish of Miss Manners's skirts with his eyes, as she hurried away down the hall.

"Sit down, Mr. Travers!" commanded the widow in an awful tone.

At that moment a buoyant young man poked his head in at the door.

"Go way, Bobby," said the widow. "Mr. Travers and I are discussing—er—psychology."

"Ugh!" remarked Bobby, dutifully withdrawing, "why do you do it, if it hurts?"

The bachelor looked up at the widow under the tail of his eyelid.

"Does it hurt?" he asked.

But the widow's underlip was curled into a distinct pout and her

eyes met his reproachfully. She dabbed them effectively with the end of her lace handkerchief.

"Of c-course it does," she said with a little choke in her voice, "when you have been here three whole days and have never noticed me and have spent every minute of your time trailing around after that —that—little—"

"But wasn't that what you invited me for?" exclaimed the bachelor helplessly.

"Of course it was," acknowledged the widow, "but—but I didn't think you'd do it."

The bachelor gazed at her a moment in blank amazement. Then a gleam of enlightenment came into his eyes and he leaned over and caught her fingers.

"Look here, Marion," he said gently, "you invited me down here to fling that girl at my head. If you didn't want me to fall in love with her, what did you want?"

"I wanted you to get enough of her!" explained the widow, smiling through her lace handkerchief.

"Well—I have. I've got too much!" vowed the bachelor fervently.

The widow laughed softly and complacently.

"That's just what I knew would happen," she said, closing her novel and flinging it onto the couch.

Then she added, looking up quizzically:

"A woman always has a reason—if you can only find out what it is."

IV

The Widow's Rival.

"WHY," said the widow, gazing thoughtfully at the ruby-faced woman with the gigantic waist-line, who sat beside the meek little man on the bench opposite, "do men marry—those?" The bachelor glanced into the violet eyes beneath the violet hat.

"Perhaps," he said insinuatingly, "because they can't get—somebody else."

"Nonsense," replied the widow poking her parasol emphatically into the sand. "With all the chance a man has——"

"Chance!" cried the bachelor scoffingly. "Chance! What chance

has a man got after a woman makes up her mind to marry him?"

The widow dug the sand spitefully with the point of her violet sunshade.

"I didn't refer to the chance of escape," she replied, icily. "I was speaking of the chance of a choice."

"That's it!" cried the bachelor. "The selection is so great—the choice is so varied! Don't you know how it is when you have too many dress patterns or hats or rings to choose from? You find it difficult to settle on any one—so difficult, in fact, that you decide not to choose at all, but to keep them all dangling——"

"Or else just shut your eyes," interrupted the widow, "and put out your hand and grab something."

"Of course, you shut your eyes!" acquiesced the bachelor. "Whoever

"CHANCE! what chance has a man got?"

went into matrimony with his eyes open?"

"A woman does," declared the widow tentatively. "She knows exactly what she wants, and, if it is possible, she gets it. It is only after she has tried and failed many times that she puts her hand into the matrimonial grab-bag, and accepts anything she happens to pull out. But a man never employs any reason at all in picking out a wife——"

"Naturally!" scoffed the bachelor. "By that time, he's lost his reason!"

The widow rested her elbow on the handle of her sunshade, put her chin in her hand and smiled out at the sea.

"Yes," she said, "he has. He has reached the marrying mood."

"The—what?"

"The marrying mood. A man never decides to marry a girl just simply because he loves her, or because she is suitable, or because he ought to marry her, or because she is irresistible or fascinating or in love with him. He never marries at all until he gets the marrying mood, the matrimonial fever—and then he marries the first girl who comes along and wants him, young or old, pretty or ugly, good or bad. And that explains why a lot of men are tied up to women that you cannot possibly see any reason for having been married at all, much less married to those particular men."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed the bachelor, I'm glad I've got past the age——"

"But you haven't!" declared the

widow emphatically. "The marrying fever is, like the measles or the appendicitis, liable to catch you at any age or stage, and you never know when or why or how you got it. Sometimes a man takes it when he is very young and rushes into a fool marriage with a woman twice his age, and sometimes he goes all his life up to sixty without catching the contagion and then gets it horribly and marries his cook or a chorus girl young enough to be his granddaughter. Haven't you seen confirmed bachelor successfully resist the wiles of the most fascinating women and turn down a dozen suitable girls—and then, just when you thought they were quite safe and entirely past the chance of marriage as well as their first youth, turn around and tie

themselves to some little fool thing without a penny to her name or a thought worth half that amount? That was a late attack of the matrimonial fever—and the older you get it the harder it goes. Let me see," added the widow thoughtfully, "how old are you?"

"I haven't lost my ideals—nor my teeth!" declared the bachelor defensively.

"What is your ideal?" asked the widow leaning over and peeping up under the bachelor's hat brim.

The bachelor stared back at her through lowered lashes.

"It's got on a violet hat," he began, "and violet——"

"Is that a ship out there?" asked the widow, suddenly becoming interested in the sea.

"And violet——"

"Oh, dear!" she interrupted petulantly. "Of course, you've got ideals. All men have ideals—but they don't often marry them. The trouble is that when a man has the marrying fever he can clothe anything in curls and petticoats with the illusions he has built around that ideal, and put the ideal's halo on her head and imagine she is the real thing. He can look at a red-headed, pug-nosed girl from an angle that will make her hair seem pure gold and her pug look Greek. By some mental feat, he can transform a girl six feet tall with no waist line and an acute elbow into a kittenish, plump little thing that he has always had in mind—and marry her. Or, if his ideal is tall and willowy and etherial, and he happens to

meet a woman weighing 200 pounds whose first thought in the morning is her breakfast and whole last thought at night is her dinner, he will picture her merely attractively plump and a marvel of intellect and imagination. And," the widow sank her chin in her hand and gazed out to sea reflectively, "it is all so pitiful, when you think how happy men could make marriage, if they would only go about it scientifically!"

"Then what," inquired the bachelor flinging away his cigar and folding his arms dramatically, "is the science of choosing a wife?"

"Well," said the widow, counting off on the tips of her lilac silk gloves, "first of all a man should never choose a wife when he finds himself feeling lonesome and dreaming of

furnished flats and stopping to talk to babies in the street. He has the marrying fever then, and is in no fit condition to pick out a wife and unless he is very careful he is liable to marry the first girl who smiles at him. He should shut his eyes tight and flee to the wilderness and not come back until he is prepared to see women in their proper lights and their right proportions."

"And then?" suggested the bachelor.

"Then," announced the widow oratorically, "he should choose a wife as he would a dish at the table —not because he finds her attractive or delicious or spicy, but—because he thinks she will agree with him."

"I see," added the bachelor, "and

won't keep him awake nights," he added.

The widow nodded.

"Nor give him a bitter taste in the mouth in the morning. A good wife is like a dose of medicine—hard to swallow, but truly helpful. The girls who wear frills and high heels and curly pompadours are like the salad with the most dressing and garnishing, likely to be too rich and spicy, while the plain little thing in the serge skirt, who never powders her nose, may prove as sweet and wholesome—as—as home-made pudding."

"Or—home-made pickles," suggested the bachelor with wry face.

The widow shook her parasol at him admonishingly.

"Don't do that!" cried the bachelor.

"Do what?" inquired the widow in astonishment.

"Wave your frills in my eyes! I had just made up my mind to propose to Miss Gunning and——"

The widow sat up perfectly straight.

"Do you really admire—a marble slab, Mr. Travers?"

"And your frills," pursued the bachelor, unmoved, "like salad dressing——"

"I beg your pardon."

"Or garnishings——"

"Mr. Travers!"

"Might be merely a lure to make me take something which would disagree with me."

The widow rose and looked coolly out over the waves.

"I can't see," she said, "why you

should fancy there could be any chance——"

"I don't," sighed the bachelor. "It isn't a matter of chance, but of choice."

The ice in the widow's eyes melted into sun in a moment. She turned to the bachelor impulsively.

"Why do you want to marry me?" she asked.

The bachelor rose and looked down at her critically.

"Well," he said, "for one thing, because you're just the woman I ought not to marry."

"What!"

"You're too highly spiced——"

"Billy!"

"And you'd be sure not to agree with me——"

"Billy Travers!"

"And because——"

"Well? Go on."

"Because——" The bachelor hesitated and gazed deep into the violet eyes.

"Please proceed, Mr. Travers."

"I won't!" The bachelor turned his back on her defiantly.

The widow came a little nearer and stooped around to peep under his hat-brim.

"Please—Billy!" she breathed softly.

"Well, then—because I'm in the marrying mood," he replied.

But the widow was half way to the hotel before he knew what had happened.

V

Money and Matrimony.

"WHAT rhymes with 'matrimony'?" inquired the widow, taking her pencil out of her mouth and looking up thoughtfully through the fringes of her pompadour.

"Money," responded the bachelor promptly, as he flung himself down on the grass beside her and proceeded to study her profile through the shadows of the maple leaves.

The widow tilted her chin scornfully.

"I suppose they do sound alike," she condescended, "but I am making a poem; and there is no poetical harmony in the combination."

"There is no harmony at all without it," remarked the bachelor shortly. "But how on earth can you make a poem out of matrimony?"

"Some people do," replied the widow loftily.

"On paper!" sneered the bachelor. "On paper they make poems of death and babies and railroad accidents and health foods. But in real life matrimony isn't a poem; it's more like a declaration of war, or an itemized expense account, or a census report, or a cold business proposition."

The widow bit the end of her pencil and laid aside her paper. If the bachelor could have caught a glimpse of her eyes beneath the lowered lashes he might not have gone on; but he was studying the sky through the maple leaves.

"It's a beautiful business proposition," he added. "A magnificent money making scheme, a——"

The bachelor's eyes had dropped to the widow's and he stopped short.

"Go on," she remarked in a cold, sweet voice that trickled down his back.

"Oh, well," he protested lamely, "when you marry for money you generally get it, don't you? But when you marry for love—it's like putting your last dollar on a long shot."

"If you mean there's a delightful uncertainty about it?" began the widow.

"There's nothing half so delightful," declared the bachelor, "as betting on a sure thing. Now, the man or woman who marries for money——"

"Earns it," broke in the widow fervently. "Earns it by the sweat of the brow. The man who marries a woman for her money is a white slave, a bond servant, a travesty on manhood. For every dollar he receives he gives a full equivalent in self-respect and independence, and all the things dearest to a real man."

"A real man," remarked the bachelor, taking out his pipe and lighting it, "wouldn't marry a woman for her money. It's woman to whom marriage presents the alluring financial prospect."

"Oh, I don't know," responded the widow, crossing her arms behind her head and leaning thoughtfully against the tree at her back. "In these days of typewriting and stenography and manicuring and trained

nursing, matrimony offers about the poorest returns, from a business standpoint, of any feminine occupation—the longest hours, the hardest work, the greatest drain on your patience, the most exacting master and the smallest pay, to say nothing of no holidays and not even an evening off."

"Nor a chance to 'give notice' if you don't like your job," added the bachelor sympathetically.

"If the average business man," went on the widow, ignoring the interruption, "demanded half of his stenographer that he demands of his wife he couldn't keep her three hours."

"And yet," remarked the bachelor, pulling on his pipe meditatively, "the average stenographer is only too

glad to exchange her position for that of wife whenever she gets——"

The jangle of gold bangles, as the widow brought her arms down from behind her head and sat up straight, interrupted his speech.

"Whenever she gets——"

The widow picked up her ruffles and started to rise.

"Whenever she gets—ready," finished the bachelor quickly.

The widow sat down again and leaned back against the tree.

"How perfectly you illustrate my point," she remarked sweetly.

"Oh," said the bachelor, taking his pipe out of his mouth, "did you have a point?"

"That marriage is something higher and finer than a business proposition, Mr. Travers, and that

there are lots of reasons for marrying besides financial ones."

"Oh, yes," agreed the bachelor, "there is folly and feminine coercion and because you can't get out of it, and——"

"As for marriage as a money affair," pursued the widow without waiting, "it's just the money side of it that causes all the squabbles and unhappiness. If they've got it, they are always quarreling over it and if they haven't got it they are always quarreling for it. The Castellanes and Marlboroughs who fight over their bills and their debts aren't any happier than the Murphys and the Hooligans who fight over the price of a pint of beer. It's just as difficult to know what to do with money when you've got it as it is to know

what to do without it when you haven't got it; and a million dollars between husband and wife is a bigger gulf than a $10 a week salary. It's not a question of the amount of money, but the question of who shall spend it that makes all the trouble."

"But don't you see," argued the bachelor, sitting up suddenly and knocking the ashes out of his pipe, "that all that would be eliminated if people would make marriage a business proposition? For instance, if two people would discuss the situation rationally and make the terms before marriage; if the man would state the services he requires and the woman would demand the compensation she thinks she deserves——"

"Ugh!" shuddered the widow, putting her hands over her eyes,

"that would be like writing your epitaph and choosing the style of your coffin."

"And every man," pursued the bachelor, "would be willing to give his wife her board and room and a salary adequate to her services and to his income——"

"And to let her eat with the family," jeered the widow.

"Well," finished the bachelor, "then marriage wouldn't offer the poorest returns in the professional market. And, besides," he added, "there would be fewer wives sitting about in apartment hotels holding their hands and ordering the bell-boys around, while their husbands are down town fretting and struggling themselves into bankruptcy; and fewer husbands spending their nights

and their money out with the boys, while their wives are bending over the cook stove and the sewing machine, trying to make ends meet on nothing a year."

"But that," cried the widow, taking her hands down from her eyes, "would mean spending your courtship talking stocks and bonds and dividends!"

"And the rest of your life forgetting them and talking love," declared the bachelor, triumphantly.

The widow looked up speculatively.

"Well—perhaps," she acquiesced, "if courtship were more of a business proposition marriage would be less of a failure. Anyhow, you'd know in advance just what a man

considered you worth in dollars and cents."

"And you'd eliminate all the uncertainty," added the bachelor.

"And the chance of having to beg for your carfare and pin money."

"And of having to go bankrupt for matinee tickets and Easter hats."

"And of being asked what you did with your allowance."

"Or of how you acquired your breath or lost your watch."

"The trouble is," sighed the widow, "that no man would ever be broad enough or generous enough to make such a proposition."

"And no woman would ever be sensible enough to listen to it."

"Nonsense. Any woman would. It's just the sort of thing we've been longing for."

"Well," said the bachelor, turning on his back and looking up at the widow speculatively, "let me see—you could have the violet room."

"What!" exclaimed the widow.

"It's got a good south view," protested the bachelor, "and besides it's not over the kitchen."

"What on earth do you mean?" The widow sat up straight and her bangles jingled warningly.

"And you could have Saturday and Wednesday evenings out. Those are my club nights."

"How dare you!"

"And any salary you might ask—"

"What are you talking about, Billy Travers?"

"I'm making you a proposal of marriage," explained the bachelor in

an injured tone. "Don't you recognize it?"

The widow rose silently, lifted the sheet of paper in her hands and tore it to pieces.

"Was that your poem?" inquired the bachelor as he watched the breeze carry the fragments away over the grass.

The widow shook out her ruffles and picked up her hat.

"You've taken all the poetry out of it," she retorted, as she fled toward the house.

The bachelor looked after her undecidedly for a moment. Then he leaned back lazily and blinked up at the sky between the leaves.

"And this," he said softly, "is the white man's burden."

"YOU'VE taken all the poetry out of it."

VI

Signs and Countersigns of Love.

"IF there were only some way," began the bachelor, gazing thoughtfully out of the window of the dining car, "in which a fellow could prove his love——"

"There are millions of them!" declared the widow, sipping her consommé daintily.

"Those mediæval fellows had such an advantage over us," complained the bachelor. "When a chap loved a girl, all he had to do to prove it was to get another chap to say he didn't, and then to break the other chap's head. That was a sure sign."

"And it was so easy," remarked the widow.

"Yes," agreed the bachelor, enthusiastically. "Is there anybody whose head you particularly want broken? I feel remarkably like fighting."

"Of course, you do," said the widow sympathetically. "The fighting spirit is born in every man. But duelling isn't a sign of love; it's a sign of egotism, hurt pride, the spirit of competition, the dog-in-the-manger feeling. Besides, it's out of fashion."

"Well," sighed the bachelor, "then I suppose I shall have to save your life or—die for you."

"You might," said the widow, nodding encouragingly, "but it wouldn't prove anything—except that you had a sense of the picturesque and dramatic. Suppose you did save my life; wouldn't you do as

much for any man, woman or child, or even any little stray dog who might happen to fall out of a boat or be caught in a fire, or get under the feet of a runaway?"

"I've got it!" cried the bachelor, "I'll write a book of poems and dedicate them to you."

The widow toyed with her spoon.

"You've done that to—several girls before," she remarked ungratefully.

"That's it!" cried the bachelor. "How is a man going to tell when he's in love when he feels the same way—every time?"

"Have you forgotten your soup?" asked the widow, glancing at the untouched plate in front of the bachelor.

The bachelor picked up his spoon languidly.

"No," he said, "but——"

"Because if you had," said the widow, "it would have been a proof."

"A—what?"

"A proof," repeated the widow. "Forgetting to eat your meals is the first sign of love. A man may write poetry and swear love by all the planets separately; but if he sits down opposite you an hour afterward and orders mutton chops and gravy and devours them to the last crumb, either he doesn't mean what he says or doesn't know what he is talking about. When he lets his breakfast grow cold and forgets to go out to his lunch and loses his interest in his dinner it's a sure sign of love."

"It might be a sign of dyspepsia," suggested the bachelor doubtfully.

"Oh, well," proceeded the widow,

sipping her soup leisurely, "there are other signs besides a lost appetite."

The bachelor looked hopeful.

"Is one of them smelling violets all day, when there aren't any 'round; and feeling a funny jump in your throat every time you catch sight of a violet hat; and suddenly discovering you have written, 'Send me eight quarts of violets and a widow,' instead of eight quarts of gasoline and a patent pump'?"

The widow leaned so far over her soup that her eyes were completely shaded by the brim of her violet hat.

"Yes," she said gently, "loss of reason is one of them—and loss of memory."

"And loss of sleep?"

"And loss of common sense."

"And loss of self-respect?"

"And of your powers of conversation."

"Nonsense!" cried the bachelor, "a man in love can say more fool things——"

The widow put down her spoon emphatically.

"A man in love," she contradicted, "can't talk at all? It's not the things he says, but the things he isn't able to say; the things that choke right up in his throat——"

"I've had that!" interrupted the bachelor.

"Had—what?"

"The 'love-lump' in the throat."

"And did you ever go up stairs to light the gas and turn on the water instead; or walk three blocks in the wrong direction without knowing it; or hunt ten minutes for your shoes

and then discover it was your collar button or your hat that you had lost?"

"Or add a column of figures and get a poem for the answer; or break your neck running to the office and then have to sit down and think what you came down early for; or begin a business letter 'Dearest Smith' and drop it in the box without a stamp, or read your paper upside down, or——"

"You've got it!" cried the widow.

"I know it," sighed the bachelor, "dreadfully!"

"The idea, I mean," said the widow, blushing. "Those are the real proofs of love.

"But," protested the bachelor, "they aren't impressive. How are you going to let the girl know——"

"A girl always knows," declared the widow.

"Are you going to say, 'Araminta, darling, I put on odd socks this morning and salted my coffee and sugared my chop. Accept this as a proof?"

"No, no, no," said the widow, laughing, "of course not! But when you arrive at her house half an hour before the time and appear at odd and embarrassing moments without a rational excuse and get mixed on your dates and look at her as if she were the moon or a ghost, and might disappear at any moment, and sit for hours gazing into space and moistening your lips in the hope that you will think of something to say——"

"She knows that she's got you!" groaned the bachelor.

"Oh, she may not," declared the

widow, cheerfully. "She may not know anything. She may be in love herself."

"That's it!" protested the bachelor, "knowing you're in love is only half the trouble. How are you going to know when a girl has reached the love stage? How are you going to know that she is not just dangling you, or marrying you for your money? They're so clever and wise and coquettish and——"

"When a girl is in love," said the widow, "she ceases being clever and wise and coquettish. She becomes mooney and silent and begins to notice things about you that you never knew yourself, such as that your nose is like Napoleon's or that you have a profile like E. H. Sothern and shoulders like Hackett's and hair

like Kyrle Bellew's. She never keeps you waiting, but is always dressed and sitting in the parlor an hour before you arrive and is never in a hurry to get home and will walk for blocks beside you in the rain with her best hat on without caring. She begins to 'mother' you——"

"To what?"

"To caution you about getting your feet wet and avoiding a draught and wearing your overcoat and to look at you every time you leave her as if she was afraid you would die before morning and—Mr. Travers, do you know I believe this train has reached Jersey City?"

"Why—why—so it has! Waiter! Waiter! Where in thunder is that blockhead? Why hasn't he brought us the rest of the dinner?"

"You forgot to order it!" said the widow, looking maliciously up under her hat.

"Jersey City! Last stop!" called the conductor from the door.

The bachelor put down his napkin and rose.

"Check, sir?" asked the waiter, with accusing eyes.

"Were you forgetting to pay?" inquired the widow, softly.

The bachelor thrust a bill into the waiter's hands and started down the aisle, followed by the widow.

"You forgot your change," remarked the widow, as they stepped into the depot.

"Oh, never mind," said the bachelor. "Where are your wraps?"

The widow clutched his sleeve.

"I—I—left them in the dining car," she stammered.

The bachelor gazed down at the top of the violet hat with a triumphant smile.

"Oh, do go back and try to get them!" moaned the widow glancing wildly at the train, which by this time was being switched onto a side track.

"It will be at the risk of my life," declared the bachelor, "but if you want—any more——"

"More—what?" asked the widow, distractedly.

"Proof," said the bachelor.

"It isn't necessary," said the widow, as she spied an excited porter running toward them, clutching a pongee coat, a silver hand bag and a violet parasol.

"These," said the bachelor, taking

them tenderly from the porter and tipping him, "are the most substantial signs of——"

"A lost head," said the widow quickly.

"Or a lost heart," added the bachelor, as they crossed the station and stepped fatuously on to—the wrong ferryboat.

VII

A Short Cut.

"WHAT ought I to do," asked the widow, carefully licking all the gum off the flap of a violet envelope and then trying to make it stick, "to a silly boy, who —asked me for a kiss?"

"What ought you to do?" repeated the bachelor, laying down his cigar and regarding the widow severely. "Refuse him, of course."

"Oh, of course," agreed the widow, rubbing the envelope spasmodically with the end of her handkerchief, "but what ought I do to teach him better?"

"I can't think of anything—better," replied the bachelor, charitably reaching for the violet envelope and closing it firmly with his fist.

"How about just taking the kiss—without asking for it?" inquired the widow naively, as she leaned luxuriously back among the cushions of the divan. "Wouldn't that have been better—for him, I mean?"

"Would it?" The bachelor looked the widow straight in the eye.

"Well," replied the widow weakly, toying with some fringe on a satin sofa pillow and carefully avoiding the bachelor's gaze, "he would have gotten it."

"And now he never will," rejoined the bachelor with a confidence he did not feel.

"Oh, I don't know." The widow

became suddenly interested in the arrangement of the fringe on the satin sofa pillow. "But it isn't the man who asks a woman for a kiss or —or anything—who gets it. It's the man who takes for granted."

"Takes—what?"

"Takes her by surprise, Mr. Travers," explained the widow, "and doesn't give her time to think or to say no. The short cut to managing a woman is not argument or reason. It's action. She may like to be coaxed, but it's the man who orders her about whom she admires—and obeys. Eve has never forgotten that she is only a rib and when Adam forgets it, she——"

"Makes him feel like a small part of the vertebræ," interpolated the bachelor tentatively.

"Naturally," returned the widow, tying the sofa pillow fringe in a hard knot and then untying it again, "when a man comes to her on his knees she is clever enough to keep him there; but when he comes to her with a scepter in his hand and determination in his eye, she has a wholesome respect for him. It's not the man who begs but the one who demands that receives. It's not the man who asks a girl to marry him, but the one who tells her that she is going to marry him, who gets her. It's not the husband who requests the privilege of carrying a latch-key or staying down town at night who can do so without fear and trembling, but the one who calmly takes the latch-key and telephones his wife that he is going to stay down town and then

rings off as though the matter were settled. The question of who's going to have the whip hand in love or matrimony is decided the very first time a man looks at a woman and lets her know who's master."

The bachelor flicked the ashes off his cigar and regarded the widow curiously.

"Are you talking Christian Science or Hypnotism?" he inquired patiently.

"Neither," replied the widow, "I'm talking facts, Mr. Travers. Haven't you ever seen a little short-legged man with a snub nose married to a beautiful, queenly creature, whom he ordered about as if she were the original Greek slave and who obeyed him as if he were Nero himself, and adored him in propor-

tion to his overbearing qualities? And have you never seen a magnificent, six-foot-two specimen of masculine humanity, who was first in war and first everywhere but in his own home, where he was afraid to put his feet on a chair or light a pipe or make an original remark, because some little dried-up runt of a woman had him hypnotized into believing that he was the thirty-second vertebræ and she all the rest of the bones and sinew of the human race? A woman is like a darky, who fancies that 'freedom' means three-quarters of the sidewalk, or a small boy who imagines that doing as he pleases means smashing his sister's toys and stealing sweets from the pantry. Put her in her place and she will stay there; but give her an inch of power and she'll

take an ell of liberty and boss you off your own door sill. The biggest, boldest woman that ever lived is built like a barge, to be towed; and any little man who puffs up enough steam and makes a loud enough noise can attach her to himself and tow her all the way up the river of life."

The bachelor laid down his cigar and gazed at the widow in awe.

"And I never knew it," he whispered huskily.

"I suppose," said the widow, beginning to toy with the fringe again, "that you've been asking girls to kiss you, all this time."

"Not *all* the time," protested the bachelor.

"And, of course," continued the widow maliciously, "they've all refused you."

"Not *all,*" repeated the bachelor, pensively.

"What?" The widow glanced up quickly.

"Once," explained the bachelor apologetically, "I didn't have a bald spot."

"When a man asks for a kiss," pursued the widow, thoughtfully, "a girl HAS to refuse him; but when he takes it——"

"She has to take it, too," said the bachelor, chuckling.

"Would you mind," asked the widow, ignoring the last flippant bit of persiflage and picking up the violet envelope, "posting a letter for me?"

"May I look at the address?" demanded the bachelor.

"It's to the boy," began the widow, "who—who——"

"Took the roundabout way?" finished the bachelor, helpfully.

The widow nodded.

"I have written him," she explained, "that he mustn't—that it would be best if he wouldn't come here any more. That will keep him in his place, I think."

"On his knees?" inquired the bachelor sarcastically.

"And I told him," proceeded the widow, with a reproachful glance at the bachelor, "how very rude and foolish——"

"Did you explain," interrupted the bachelor, "that the foolishness consisted in not taking the kiss?"

"Mr. Travers!"

"And that the rudeness lay entirely in assuming that you might not want to be——"

"How dare you!" cried the widow, flaming as red as the scarlet satin sofa pillow behind her head. "I gave him a dreadful scolding!" she added, looking pensively at the sealed note and toying with the edge of the flap, as though she half wished it would come open again.

"In other words," remarked the bachelor laconically, "having him down, you proceeded to wipe your feet on him. Since he had turned the left cheek, you made him turn all the way round, so that you could stick pins in his back and make him feel like the thirty-second vertebræ and——"

"I had to, Mr. Travers," cried the

widow pleadingly. "It was my duty."

"Your—what?"

"To teach him a lesson," explained the widow promptly. "He's got to learn that in the situation between man and woman there's only one throne and that whoever gets up on it first wields the sceptre. He's got to learn that the conquest of woman is not, like the Battle of Waterloo, an affair of strategy, but like the Battle of Bunker Hill or Sennacherib——"

"Or the Boston Tea Party or the Massacre of the Innocents," broke in the bachelor. "But aren't you a little hard on the girl? If you get him too well trained he'll beat her."

"Well," replied the widow promptly, "if he does she'll adore him. Besides, it's much better to have the matrimonial medicine ad-

ministered in allopathic doses than in the little homeopathic pellets of caution and deceit, and lies and arguments which end in the divorce court, and a woman enjoys being bossed and bullied and ordered about by the man she loves quite as much as he enjoys the bossing and bullying. It's her natural instinct to look up, but she can't look up to a man who is figuratively at her feet. She may struggle against the man who attempts to conquer her by main force, but she enjoys being conquered just the same, and it takes a great burden off her soul to be able to lay her head on a broad, masculine shoulder and to know that every affair in life is going to be settled and decided for her.

"She may talk about thinking for herself and voting and all that, but

she is always glad enough to sit back and be thought for and voted for by some man who has magnetized her into believing him the incarnation of intelligence. And any man can do it. If the average husband only had a little more nerve and fewer nerves, he could master his wife with one hand and his eyes shut. The heathen Turk can get along better with a whole harem full of women than the civilized man gets along with one lone, lorn wife. It isn't because he's any wiser or cleverer or kinder, but because the first Turk learned the short cut to managing a woman and passed the secret down in the family. They don't ask them to marry them over there, they order them; they don't request them to run an errand or sew on a button, they merely wave their

"I'VE got the courage at last—and the audacity."

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hands and the women fight for the privilege of obeying. They have known for ages what the white man never seems to have learned, that the way to take a woman is by storm and the way to hold her is by force and that any man can manage any woman if he only knows how and has the audacity and the courage—What are you trying to do, Mr. Travers?"

"I'm taking a short cut to the divan," replied the bachelor, sitting down beside the widow, "and I've got the courage at last——"

"How dare you, Billy Travers!"

"And the audacity——"

"Stop! Stop!"

"And the nerve——"

"Mr. Taylor," announced the maid, appearing suddenly between the portieres at this critical moment.

"Oh, mercy!" cried the widow, "and my hair is just——"

"Am I intruding?" asked a fresh-faced young man, entering briskly between the portieres.

"Not at all, Bobby," said the widow sweetly, holding out one hand and feeling her back hair with the other. "You arrived just at the—psychological moment. We have been talking about you for the last half hour."

VIII

After Love——(?)

"WHY is it," asked the widow, swinging her chatelaine pensively as she strolled down the avenue beside the bachelor, "that the man who is most in love is most apt to get over it suddenly?"

The bachelor withdrew his eyes from the pretty pair of ankles across the street and glanced down at the widow with the lenient smile of superior wisdom.

"Why is it," he retorted, "that the man who drinks the most champagne at dinner has the worst headache next morning?"

"That isn't any explanation at all,

Mr. Travers." The widow's chatelaine jingled impatiently. "Champagne is intoxicating."

"So is love."

"Champagne leaves you with an—an all-gone feeling."

"And love leaves you with—'that tired feeling'."

"Not me," said the widow promptly, "I always feel exhilarated after—after——"

"Afterwards," finished the bachelor helpfully. "But you're a woman. It's the man who has the 'tired feeling'."

"What is it like?" persisted the widow.

"Well," the bachelor flipped his cane thoughtfully, "did you ever eat a fourteen course dinner, and then go to Sherry's afterward for supper and

then go to Delmonico's for a snack and to Rector's for——"

"I've been through it," sighed the widow.

"You didn't want any more, did you?" asked the bachelor sympathetically. "That's the way a man feels when he's had enough of love—or a woman."

"But—but love isn't indigestible."

"Too much of anything—love or dinner or champagne—is apt to take away your appetite. And too much of a woman is sure to make you hate the sight of her."

The widow's chatelaine was dancing madly in the afternoon sunlight.

"I don't suppose," she said witheringly, "that it would be possible for a woman to get too much of a man!"

"No," agreed the bachelor cheer-

fully, as he squinted at another pair of pretty ankles, "women are sentimental topers. They sip their wine or their sentiment slowly and comfortably; they don't gulp it down like a man. That's why the man has usually finished the bottle before the woman has touched her glass. He is ready to turn out the lights and put an end to the affair just as she has begun to get really interested. But," and the bachelor turned suddenly upon the widow, "who is the man? Show him to me!" and he brought his cane down fiercely on the sidewalk.

"Wh-what man?" asked the widow, turning pink to the tips of her ears.

"The man who has jilt—gotten over it. I don't see how it's possible,"

he added thoughtfully, "with you."

"Me!" The widow's voice was as chill and crisp as the autumn air. "I wish," she added musingly, "that I knew how to patch it up."

"That's right!" retorted the bachelor. "Try to revive his interest in champagne by offering it to him—the morning after. What he needs, my dear lady, is—ice. When he has had a little ice and a little tabasco sauce——"

"He may want more champagne?" asked the widow hopefully.

"Yes," replied the bachelor, swinging his cane cheerfully, "but not from the same bottle. Will women ever learn," he mused, "that it is as impossible to revive a man's interest in a woman he has completely gotten over loving as to make him want stale

champagne with all the fizz gone out of it?"

"I don't see why," said the widow. "A woman often falls in love with the same man twice."

"Because she never falls too much in love with him—once," explained the bachelor.

The widow's chatelaine rattled indignantly.

"Nonsense!" she cried, "A woman's love is always stronger and deeper than a man's."

"But it isn't so effervescent. She is a natural miser and she hoards her feelings. A man flings his sentiment about like a prodigal and naturally when it's all gone—there isn't any left."

"Is that when he gets the 'tired

feeling?' " inquired the widow sympathetically.

"Yes," said the bachelor, "and nothing is worse than waking up in the morning with a dark brown taste in your mouth—to find the woman standing before you offering you more champagne. But she always does. A woman never seems to know when the logical conclusion of a love affair has arrived. She clings with all her strength to the tattered remnants of sentiment and shuts her eyes and tries to make believe it isn't morning, when she ought to go away——"

"And let him sleep it off," suggested the widow.

"That's it," agreed the bachelor, "I once knew a man who was infatuated with a woman who used attar of roses

on her gloves and things. When he woke up—I beg your pardon—after they had broken off, he never could abide the smell of roses."

"I suppose," said the widow, holding her muff against her cheek sentimentally, "it reminded him of all the tender little tête-à-têtes and moonlight nights and the way her hair curled about her forehead and the way she used to smile at him, and of her gloves and her ruffles and the color of her eyes and——"

"It didn't!" said the bachelor emphatically. "It nauseated him. It's the woman who always remembers the pleasant part of a love affair. A man remembers only—the next morning—and the hard time he had getting out of it."

"And the headache," added the widow.

"And the 'tired feeling'."

"And the other woman," suggested the widow contemptuously.

"Yes," agreed the bachelor, "the other woman, of course. But," he added thoughtfully, "if a woman could only take the hint in time——"

"What time?" asked the widow. "When a man begins to be late for his engagements?"

"Yes; or to forget them altogether."

"And to make excuses and enlarge on his rush of business."

"And to seem abstracted during the conversation."

"And to stop noticing her jokes or her frocks or the way she does her hair."

"And to stay away from places where he could be sure to meet her."

"But," protested the widow, "they always make such plausible excuses."

"Nothing," said the bachelor confidently, "will keep a man away from a woman except a lack of interest in her——"

"Or an interest in another woman," added the widow promptly. "But," she concluded tentatively, "there ought to be a cure for it."

"For what? The other woman?"

"That tired feeling, Mr. Travers."

"There isn't any cure," replied the bachelor promptly, "but there's a good preventive. When you were a very little girl," he continued patronizingly, "and liked jam——"

"I like it now!" declared the widow.

"How did your mother manage to preserve your interest in it?"

"She took the jam away, Mr. Travers, and put it on the top shelf always—just before I had had enough."

"Well, that's the way to preserve a man's interest in a woman," declared the bachelor. "Deal yourself out to him in homeopathic doses. Put yourself on the top shelf, where it is hard for him to get at you. Feed him sugar out of a teaspoon; don't pass him the whole sugar bowl. Then he will be always begging for more. One only wants more of anything that one can't get enough of, you know. Now, if a woman would use her judgment——"

"As if a woman in love had any judgment!" mocked the widow.

"That's it!" sighed the bachelor, "She never has. She just lays the whole feast before the man, flings all her charms at his head at once, surfeits him with the champagne of her wit and lets him eat all the sugar off his cake right away. The love affair springs up like a mushroom and—"

"Oh, well," interrupted the widow impatiently, "I like mushroom love affairs. I like a man who can fling himself headlong into an affair and——"

"Of course you do!" sighed the bachelor, "every woman does. The sensible and temperate man who will love her all his life——"

"A little!" said the widow contemptuously.

"Well, a little is enough," retorted the bachelor, "at a time."

"That depends," said the widow, "on how many times—one is loved. There are some women who are so saving of their sugar and frugal with their sentiment that they never know the real joy of a grand passion or of having a man love them properly. What's the use of having money if you are always going to keep it in the bank?" she added conclusively.

The bachelor looked down at her and said nothing. There was a smile of hopeless resignation in his eyes.

"Here we are!" cried the widow, suddenly stopping in front of a tall brownstone house and holding out her hand politely. "So glad to have——"

"Aren't you going to invite me in?" demanded the bachelor, in astonishment.

The widow lifted her eyebrows in faint surprise.

"What," she asked sweetly, "after——"

"You broke an engagement with me last night!" blurted out the bachelor, looking the widow straight in the eyes. But the widow shifted her gaze to the park across the street and swung her chatelaine indifferently.

"And you weren't 'at home' to me the day before yesterday and you were out of town for a week before that; and you promised me that this afternoon——"

"Did I?" asked the widow, looking up innocently.

"Yes, you did!" declared the bachelor.

"Oh, well," laughed the widow, as

she tripped up the steps with a wave of her muff, "I was only showing you the sugar bowl; but I didn't mean you could have another spoonful; besides," she added, turning round and talking through the tunnel in her muff, "there's somebody waiting inside."

"Who?" demanded the bachelor.

"The man with the 'tired feeling'," said the widow.

"But," began the bachelor in a puzzled voice, "if he is tired of—of you——"

"Me!" the widow laughed. "He isn't tired of me, Mr. Travers. It's —the other woman. He came to me for—for——"

"A bracer?" suggested the bachelor. "What are you going to give him?" he added.

"Vinegar, mustard, pepper, salt," said the widow counting off the buttons of her coat, child fashion.

The bachelor looked at her out of the corner of his eye.

"Anything else?" he asked.

"A little—ice," said the widow, gazing out over the park.

"Anything else?" persisted the bachelor.

The widow studied her muff musingly.

"Oh—I don't know," she said, doubtfully.

"Any—sugar?" demanded the bachelor.

The widow shook her head smilingly.

"No," she said, "I'm saving that for another——"

"Another!"

"Another time," said the widow ambiguously as she let the door close softly behind her.

IX

Her Way.

"THERE," said the bachelor, as he nodded amiably at the big, jolly-looking man beside the little, weazened woman, "is the best husband the Lord ever made!"

"The Lord!" said the widow scornfully. "It isn't the Lord who makes husbands. It's the wife!"

"And I always thought God made Adam," sighed the bachelor, humbly.

"Adam," said the widow promptly, as she dropped another lump of sugar into her tea, "wasn't a husband. He was only a man. And a man is only —raw material. He is like a ready-made frock or a ready-made coat; he has got to be cut down and built up

and ironed out and taken in and to have all the raw edges trimmed off before he is properly——"

"Finished?" suggested the bachelor.

The widow nodded cheerfully.

"Yes," she agreed, "and adjusted to matrimony. And even then sometimes he is a dreadful botch."

"And all his style is gone," sighed the bachelor.

The widow studied her Sévres cup thoughtfully.

"Well," she admitted, "sometimes the material is so bad or so skimpy—"

"So—what?"

The widow smiled patiently.

"Skimpy," she repeated. "There is so little to some men that the cleverest woman couldn't patch them up

into a full-sized specimen. They are like the odds and ends left on the remnant counter. You have to do the best you can with them and then use Christian Science to make yourself believe they are all there and that the patches don't show. Haven't you ever seen magnificent women trailing little annexes after them like echoes or—or——"

"Captives in the wake of a conquering queen?" broke in the bachelor.

The widow studied her Sévres cup purple plume on her hat danced.

"Those," she exclaimed, "are the bargain-counter husbands, picked up at the last moment and made over to fit the situation—which they never do."

The bachelor set down his teacup

with the light of revelation in his eyes.

"And I always thought," he exclaimed solemnly, "that they were picked out on purpose to act as shadows or—or satellites."

"Picked out!" echoed the widow mockingly. "As if all women wouldn't be married to Greek gods or Napoleon Bonapartes or Wellingtons or Byrons if they could 'pick out' a husband. Husbands are like Christmas gifts. You can't choose them. You've just got to sit down and wait until they arrive; and sometimes they don't arrive at all. A woman doesn't 'pick out' a husband; she 'picks over' what's offered and takes the best of the lot."

"And sometimes you're so long picking them over," added the bache-

lor, "that the best ones are snapped up by somebody else and you have to take the left-overs."

The widow poised her spoon above her cup tentatively.

"Well," she sighed, "it's all a lottery anyhow. The girl who snaps up her first offer of marriage is as likely to get something good as the one who snaps her finger at it and waits for a Prince Charming until the last hour and then discovers that she has passed him by and that some other woman has taken him and made him over beautifully. And even if a girl had the whole world to select from, she wouldn't know how to choose. You never can tell by the way a thing looks under the electric light in the shop how it will look in broad daylight when you have got it home, or

how it will make up or whether it will fade or run or shrink. And you never can tell by the way a man acts before marriage how he will come out in the wash of domesticity, or stand the wear and tear of matrimony. It's usually the most brilliant and catchy patterns of manhood that turn out to be cotton-backed after the gloss of the honeymoon has worn off. And on the other hand you may carefully select something serviceable—dull and virtuous and worthy and all that—and he may prove so stiff and lumpy and set in his ways and cross-grained and seamy and irritable that you will cultivate gray hairs and wrinkles——"

"Ironing him out?" suggested the bachelor.

"Yes," agreed the widow, "and the

wildest 'jolly good fellow' will often tame down like a lamb or a pet pony in harness and will become a joy forever with a little trimming off and taking in and basting up."

"Humph," protested the bachelor, "but when you catch 'em wild and tame 'em, how do you know they are not going to break the harness or burst the basting threads?"

The widow considered a moment.

"You don't," she acknowledged grudgingly. "But there is a great deal in catching the wild variety and domesticating them while they are young. Of course, it's utterly impossible to subdue a lion after he has got his second teeth, and it's utterly foolish to try to reform a man—after he is thirty or has begun to lose his hair. Besides," she added, "there is so

much in the woman who does the training and the making over. There are some women who could spoil the finest masculine cloth in the world by too much cutting and ripping and—and nagging; while there are others who can give a man or a house or a frock just the touch that will perfect them."

"How do they do it?" asked the bachelor enthusiastically. "Take 'em by the nape of the neck and——"

"Mercy, no!" cried the widow. "They take them unawares. The well-trained husband never knows what has happened to him. He only knows that, after ten years of matrimony, he is ashamed to acknowledge his own youthful picture. He has been literally re-formed in everything from his collars and the way

he parts his hair to his morals and the way he signs his name. The best husbands aren't caught; they're made. And the luckiest woman isn't the one who marries the best man, but the one who makes the most out of the man she marries."

"But," protested the bachelor, "if we're such a lot and such a lottery, why do you marry us at all?"

The widow looked up in surprise and stopped with her cup poised in midair.

"Why do we wear frocks, Mr. Travers?" she asked witheringly. "Why do we pompadour our hair or eat with forks or go to pink teas? Marriage is a custom; and if a woman doesn't marry she is simply non—non——"

"IF we're such a lot, why do you marry us?"

"Compos mentis?" inquired the bachelor, helpfully.

"Well, yes," said the widow, "but that wasn't what I meant. What is the Latin for 'not in it'? Her father looks at her accusingly every time he has to pay her dressmaker's bill and her mother looks at her commiseratingly every time she comes home without being engaged and all her friends look at her as if she were a curiosity or—or a failure. And besides, she misses her mission in life. That was what the Lord put Eve in the world for—to give the finishing touches to Adam."

"She finished him all right!" exclaimed the bachelor fervently.

"Making a living," went on the widow scorning the insinuation, "or making a career or making fame or

a fortune isn't the real forte of woman. It's making a husband—out of a man."

"I should think," said the bachelor setting down his teacup and leaning back comfortably in his chair, "that they would form a corporation and set up a factory where they could turn 'em out by the dozen or the crate—or——"

"Pooh!" cried the widow, "a husband is a work of art and has to be made by hand. He can't be turned out by machinery like a chromo or a lithograph. And, besides, if you want a ready-made one you can always find plenty of them on the second-hand counter——"

"On the—where?"

"Where they keep the widowers," explained the widow. "If a woman

isn't interested or clever enough to manufacture her own husband, she can always find some man who has been modeled by another woman. And she has the satisfaction of knowing exactly what she's getting and just what to expect. The only trouble is that, in case she makes a mistake in her choice, she never has a chance to make him over. He has been cut down and relined and faced and patched already to his limit."

"And his seams are apt to be shiny and his temper frayed at the edges," declared the bachelor.

"And you have to be very sure that he fits your disposition."

"And matches your taste."

"And that he won't pinch on the bank account."

"Nor stretch on the truth."

"And that the other woman hasn't botched him."

"And even then he's a hand-me-down—and may shrink or run or—"

"Oh, widowers don't shrink or run," retorted the widow. "Matrimony is a habit with them, and they feel like a cab-horse out of harness without it. They long to feel the bit between their teeth and the gentle hand on the reins——"

"And the basting threads," added the bachelor. "I wonder what it's like," he went on, meditatively.

"You'll never know," said the widow, setting her cup on the tabourette. "You're too old."

"Yes, I've got my second teeth," sighed the bachelor.

"And your bald spot."

"And I've sown my second crop of wild oats."

"And yet," said the widow leaning her chin in her hand and looking up thoughtfully under her purple feather, "it would be a great triumph——"

"I won't be put in harness!" protested the bachelor.

The widow considered him gravely.

"There's plenty of material in you," she declared. "You could be trimmed off and cut down and——"

"I'm too tough to cut!"

"And relined."

"I'm almost moth-eaten now!" moaned the bachelor.

The widow leaned forward and scrutinized him with interest.

"It would be a pity," she said

slowly, "to let the wrong woman botch you. The next time you propose to me," she added thoughtfully, "I think I'll——"

"Did I ever propose to you?" broke in the bachelor with real fright.

"Oh, lots of times," said the widow; "it's almost a habit now."

"But you refused me!" pleaded the bachelor. "Say you refused me."

"I did," said the widow promptly. "I wasn't looking for—remnants."

"Never mind!" retorted the bachelor. "Some day you may find I've been grabbed up."

"You'll have lost all your—starch and style by then," said the widow as she patted her back hair and started for the door.

The bachelor followed, putting on his gloves.

"How do you know that?" he asked, when they had bidden their hostess good-afternoon and stood on the portico saying goodby.

"Well," said the widow, "it would take an artist to make you over. The wrong woman would utterly ruin you."

"And who is the wrong woman?" The bachelor tried to look into the widow's eyes beneath the purple feather.

But the widow only glanced out over the lawn and swung her parasol.

"Who is the wrong woman?" persisted the bachelor.

The widow studied the tip of her patent leather toe.

"Who is the wrong woman?"

The widow looked up suddenly under her violet feather.

"The other woman," she said softly, "of course."

X

MARRIAGE.

"ISN'T all this talk about 'trial marriages' absurd?" remarked the widow, laying her newspaper on the tabourette and depositing two small red kid toes on the edge of the fender.

"It is," agreed the bachelor, cheerfully, with his eyes on the red kid toes, "considering that all marriages are—trials."

"Just fancy," went on the widow, scornfully, ignoring the flippancy, "being leased to a husband or wife for a period of years, like a flat or a yacht or—or——"

"A second-hand piano," suggested the bachelor.

"And knowing," continued the

widow, gazing contemplatively into the fire, "that when the lease or the contract or whatever it is expired, unless the other party cared to renew it, you would be on the market again."

"And probably in need of all sorts of repairs," added the bachelor, reflectively, "in your temper and your complexion and your ideas."

"Yes," sighed the widow, "ten years of married life will rub all the varnish off your manners, and all the color off your illusions and all the finish off your conversation."

"And the hinges of your love making and your pretty speeches are likely to creak every time you open your mouth," affixed the bachelor, gloomily.

"And you are bound to be old-fash-

ioned," concluded the widow, with conviction, "and to compare badly with brand-new wives and husbands with all the modern improvements. Besides," she continued, thoughtfully, "even if you should be lucky enough to find another—another—"

"Tenant for your heart?" suggested the bachelor, helpfully.

The widow nodded.

"There would be the agony," she went on, "of getting used to him or her."

"And the torture," added the bachelor, with a faint shudder, "of going through with the wedding ceremony again and of walking up a green and yellow church aisle with a green and yellow feeling and a stiff new coat, and the gaping multitude gazing at you as if you were a new

specimen of crocodile or a curio or——"

"It takes nearly all of one lifetime," interrupted the widow, impatiently, "to get used to one wife or husband; but, according to the 'trial marriage' idea, just as you had gotten somebody nicely trained into all your little ways and discovered how to manage him——"

"And to bluff him," interpolated the bachelor.

"And what to have for dinner when you were going to show him the bill for a new hat," proceeded the widow, "and how to keep him at home nights——"

"And to separate him from his money," remarked the bachelor, sarcastically.

"And to make him see things your

way," concluded the widow, "it would be time to pack up your trunks and leave. Any two people," she continued, meditatively, "can live together fairly comfortably after they have discovered the path around one another's nerves—the little things not to say and not to do in order to avoid friction, and the little things to say and to do that will oil the matrimonial wheels. But it would take all the 'trial' period to get the domestic machine running, and then——"

"You'd be running after another soul-mate," finished the bachelor, sympathetically.

"Yes." The widow crossed the red kid toes and then drew them quickly under the ruffles of her skirts as she caught the bachelor staring at them.

"And—I've—forgotten what I was going to say," she finished, turning the color of her slippers.

"Oh, it doesn't matter," said the bachelor, consolingly.

"What!"

"It doesn't matter what you say," explained the bachelor, "it's the way you say it, and——"

"About soul-mates," broke in the widow, collecting herself, "there'd always be the chance," she pursued hurriedly, "that you'd have to take a second-hand one."

"Sometimes," remarked the bachelor, blowing a smoke ring and gazing through it at the place where the widow's toes had been, "second-hand goods are more attractive than cheap, new articles. For instance, widows——"

"Oh, widows!" interrupted the widow impatiently, "They're different. They're like heirlooms—only parted with at death. But it would be different with a wife who was relinquished because she wasn't wanted. If anybody is anxious to get rid of something it is a pretty sure sign that it isn't worth having. It's nearly always got a flaw somewhere and it's seldom what it is represented to be. Besides, I've noticed that the woman who can't get along with one husband, usually finds it just as difficult to get along with another."

"There would always be the chance," protested the bachelor, "that you might get the party who had done the discarding."

"And who might want to do it again," objected the widow triumph-

antly. "Just imagine," she added irrelevantly, "living with a person whom somebody else had trained!"

"Oh, that would have its advantages," declared the bachelor. "A horse broken to harness is always easier to handle."

"Perhaps," agreed the widow leaning back and thoughtlessly putting her red kid toes on the fender again, "but when two horses are going to travel together it is always best for them to get used to one another's gait from the first. Don't you look at it that way?"

"Which way?" asked the bachelor, squinting at the fender with his head on the side.

"Fancy," said the widow not noticing the deflection, "marrying a man who had been encouraged to take an

interest in the household affairs and having him following you about picking up things after you; or one, whose first wife had trained him to sit by the fire in the evening, and whom it took a derrick to get to the theatre or a dinner party; or one who had been permitted to smoke a pipe and put his feet all over the furniture and growl about the meals and boss the cook!"

"Or to a wife," interpolated the bachelor, "who had always handled the funds and monopolized the conversation and chosen her husband's collars and who threw all her past husbands at you every time you did something she wasn't used to or objected to something she was used to."

"Yes," agreed the widow with a little shiver, "what horrid things

two people could say to one another."

"Such as 'Just wait until the lease is up!' " suggested the bachelor.

The widow nodded.

"Or, 'The next time I marry, I'll be careful not to take anybody with red hair,' or, 'Thank goodness it won't last forever!' " she added.

"That's the beauty of it!" broke in the bachelor enthusiastically. "It wouldn't last forever! And the knowledge that it wouldn't would be such an anæsthetic."

"Such a what!" the widow sat up so suddenly that both toes slipped from the fender and her heels landed indignantly on the floor.

"It would be the lump of sugar," explained the bachelor, "that would take away the bitter taste and make you able to swallow all the trials

more easily. It's the feeling that a painful operation won't last long that makes it possible to grin and bear it. Besides, it would do away with all sorts of crimes, like divorce and wife murder and ground glass in the coffee. Knowing that the marriage was only temporary and that we were only sort of house-party guests might make us more polite and agreeable and entertaining, so as to leave a good impression behind us."

"I do believe," cried the widow, sitting up straight and looking at the bachelor accusingly, "that you're arguing in favor of 'trial marriage.' "

"I'm not arguing in favor of marriage at all," protested the bachelor plaintively. "But marrying for life is like putting the whole dinner on the table at once. It takes away your

appetite. Marrying on trial would be more like serving it in courses."

"And changing the course would be such a strain," declared the widow. "Why, when the contract was up how would you know how to divide things—the children and—"

"The dog and the cat."

"And all the little mementos you had collected together and the things you had shared in common and the favorite arm chair and the things you had grown used to and fond of——"

"Oh, well, in that case," remarked the bachelor, "you might have grown so used to and fond of one another that when it came to the parting of the ways, you would not want to part them. After all," he went on soberly, "if 'trial marriages' were put into effect, they would end nine times out

of ten in good old fashioned matrimony. A man can get as accustomed to a woman as he does to a pipe or a chair——"

"What!"

"And a woman," pursued the bachelor, "can become as attached to a man and as fond of him as she is of an old umbrella or a pair of old shoes that have done good service. No matter how battered or worn they may become, nor how many breaks there are in them, we can never find anything to quite take their place. Matrimony, after all, is just a habit; and husbands and wives become habits—habits that however disagreeable they may be we don't want to part with. 'Trial marriages,' even if they should be tried, wouldn't alter things much. As long as two people

can stand one another they will cling together anyhow, and if they can't they won't anyhow; and whether it's a run out lease or a divorce or prussic acid that separates them doesn't make much difference. Custom, not the wedding certificate, is the tie that binds most of us. The savage doesn't need any laws to hold him to the woman of his choice. Habit does it; and if habit doesn't the woman will!"

The widow sighed and leaned back in her chair.

"I suppose so," she said, "but it seems dreadfully dreary."

"What seems dreadfully dreary?" inquired the bachelor.

"Matrimony," replied the widow solemnly. "It IS like those old chairs and pipes and shoes and things you were speaking of; it's full of

holes and breaks and bare spots, and it won't always work—but there's nothing that will quite take the place of it."

"Nothing," said the bachelor, promptly. "That's why I want to—"

The widow rose quickly and shook out her skirts.

"Now, don't begin that, Billy," she said, trying to be severe, "you're too old!"

"Oh, well, I'm still in good repair," protested the bachelor.

The widow shook her head.

"All the varnish is worn off your ideals," she objected, "and the hinges of your enthusiasm creak and you've got a bare spot on the top of your head, and——"

"But I've most of the modern improvements," broke in the bachelor,

desperately, "and I'm not second-hand, anyway!"

"No," said the widow, looking him over critically, "you're shop-worn. But, originally, you were an attractive article, and you're genuine and good style and well preserved, and if——"

"Well?" The bachelor looked up expectantly.

"If there WERE such a thing as 'trial marriages'—" The widow hesitated again.

"You'd give me a trial?" asked the bachelor eagerly.

"Oh," said the widow, studying the toes of her red slippers, "it wouldn't be—such a trial!"

"NO," said the widow, "you're shop-worn."

XI

The Widow's Deal.

"WHO is the ideal woman?" asked the widow pensively, laying down her embroidery hoop and clasping her hands behind her head.

The bachelor blew a smoke ring reflectively and squinted through it at the widow.

"You've got powder on your nose!" he remarked disapprovingly.

The widow snatched up a diaphanous lace handkerchief and began rubbing her nose.

"Have I got too much on?" she asked anxiously.

"Any," replied the bachelor, with dignified scorn, "is too much—in a man's eyes."

The widow laughed and stopped rubbing her nose.

"But it isn't in his eyes," she protested, "if it is put on so artistically that he doesn't see it. Getting it on straight is such an art!" and the widow sighed.

"Black art, you mean," exclaimed the bachelor disgustedly. "A made-up woman is like paste jewelry and imitation bric-a-brac. She looks cheap and unsubstantial and as though she wouldn't wear well. Even granting that you aren't half good enough for us——"

"What!"

"And that you don't come up to our standards——"

The widow dropped her embroidery hoop and sat up with blazing eyes.

"You flatter yourself, Mr. Travers!"

"No, I don't!" retorted the bachelor. "It's you who flatter us, when you think it necessary to plaster over your defects and put additions on your figures and rouge on your cheeks and frills on your manners. As a matter of fact," he added decisively, "a man's ideal is a natural woman with a natural complexion and natural hair and natural ways and natural self-respect."

The widow sighed and took up her embroidery hoop again.

"I used to think so, too," she said sadly.

The bachelor lifted his eyebrows inquiringly.

"Before I discovered," she ex-

plained, "that it was just as often a woman with butter-colored hair and a tailor-made figure and a 'past' and a manufactured 'bloom of health.' The truth is," she concluded, stabbing her needle very carefully into the centre of an unhealthy looking green silk rose, "that no two men admire the same woman, and no one man admires the same thing in two women. Now, there's Miss Gunning, who wears a sweater and says 'damn' and is perfectly natural and self-respecting and——"

"No man gets ecstatic over a bad imitation of himself!" expostulated the bachelor.

"Then why," said the widow, laying down her needle and fixing the bachelor with a glittering eye, "do you spend so much time on the golf

links, and out driving and hunting and walking with her?"

"Because," explained the bachelor, meekly, "she sometimes hits the ball, and she can sit in her saddle without being tied there, and she doesn't grab the reins nor call a 'hoof' a 'paw.' But," he added fervently, "I'd take my hat and run if she asked me to spend my life with her."

"Oh, well," the widow tossed her head independently. "She won't. Miss Gunning can take care of herself."

"That's just it!" pursued the bachelor. "The very fact that she can take care of herself and get across gutters alone and pick up things for herself and handle her own horse and beat me at golf and tennis, takes away that gratifying sense of protection—"

"And superiority," interposed the widow softly.

"That a man likes to feel toward a woman," concluded the bachelor, ignoring her. "Muscle and biceps and a 32-inch waist," he added, "are 'refreshing,' but in time they get on your nerves. It may not be immoral for a dear little thing to say 'damn,' but it affects a man just as it would to hear a canary bird squawking like a parrot. When a chap is going for a walk cross country he may pick out the girl with the stride and the strong back, who can leap a fence and help herself over puddles, to accompany him, but when he is ready for a walk to the altar he naturally prefers somebody who understands the art of leaning gently on the masculine arm

and who hasn't any rough edges or——"

"Sharp points of view," suggested the widow.

"Or opinions on the equality of the sexes," added the bachelor.

"Or on politics."

"Or the higher life."

"Or on anything but the latest way to curl her hair and make over a hat," finished the widow. "Isn't it funny," she added thoughtfully twisting a French knot into the centre of the sickly green rose, "how many men idealize a fool?"

The bachelor started.

"I—I beg your pardon," he stammered.

"All a woman has got to know in order to wear a halo," went on the widow, calmly fastening the French

knot with a jerk of her needle, "is how to keep it on straight. All a man demands of her is the negative virtues and the knowledge of how not to do things; how not to think, how not to argue, how not to nag, how not to theorize, how not to be athletic, how not to spend money, how not to take care of herself, how not——"

"You've got your ideas into a French knot!" broke in the bachelor desperately. "You're all tangled up in the thread of your argument. It isn't how not to do things but how to do them that is important to a woman. It isn't what she does but how she does it that matters. She may commit a highway murder or low down burglary; and if she does it in a ruffled skirt and a picture hat any man will forgive her. Her

morals may be as crooked and dark as a lane at midnight; but if her manners are smooth and gentle and guileless and tender she can deceive the cleverest man alive into believing her a nun. It isn't what she says but how she says it that counts. There are some women who could read your death warrant or repeat the multiplication table in such a confiding voice and with such a tender glance that you would want to take them in your arms and thank them for it. It isn't what a woman wears but how she wears it; it's not her beauty nor her talents nor her frocks that make her fascinating, but her ways, the little earmarks of femininity that God put on every creature born to wear petticoats; and if she's got those she may be a Lucretia Borgia or a

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He doesn't want to see how the wheels go around at the toilet table or in a woman's head or her heart; and it's the subtle, illusive little thing that he doesn't notice until he steps on her and finds her looking up adoringly at him under his nose that he idealizes."

"And marries," added the bachelor conclusively.

"And then forgets," sighed the widow, "while he goes off to amuse himself with the obvious person with peroxide hair and a straight-front figure. I don't know," she added tentatively, "that it's much fun being an ideal woman."

"Who said you were?" demanded the bachelor suddenly.

The widow started and turned pink to her chin.

"Oh—nobody—that is, several people, Mr. Travers."

"Had you refused them?" asked the bachelor thoughtfully.

The widow blushed a deeper pink and bent over her pale green rose so low that the bachelor could not see her eyes.

"Why—that is—I don't see what that has to do with it."

"It has everything to do with," replied the bachelor positively.

"And you haven't told me yet," continued the widow, suddenly changing the subject, "whom you consider the ideal woman."

"Don't you know?" asked the bachelor insinuatingly.

The widow shook her head without lifting her eyes.

"Well, then, she is—but so many of them have told you."

"You haven't," persisted the widow.

The bachelor sighed and rose to go.

"The ideal woman," he said, as he slipped on his gloves, "is—the woman you can't get. Is that the firelight playing on your pompadour?" he added, looking down upon the widow through half-closed eyes. "Do you know—for a moment—I thought it was a halo."

XII

New Year's Irresolutions.

"ISN'T it hard," said the widow, glancing ruefully at the holly-wreathed clock above the mantel-piece, "to know where to begin reforming yourself?"

"Great heavens!" exclaimed the bachelor, "you are not going to do anything like that, are you?"

The widow pointed solemnly to the hands of the clock, which indicated 11.30, and then to the calendar, on which hung one fluttering leaf marked December 31.

"It is time," she sighed, "to begin our mental housecleaning, to sweep out our collection of last year's follies, and dust off our petty sins and fling away our old vices and——"

"That's the trouble!" broke in the bachelor. "It's so hard to know just what to throw away and what to keep. Making New Year's resolutions is like doing the spring house-cleaning or clearing out a drawer full of old letters and sentimental rubbish. You know that there are lots of things you ought to get rid of, and that are just in the way, and that you would be better off without, but the minute you make up your mind to part with anything, even a tiny, insignificant vice, it suddenly becomes so dear and attractive that you repent and begin to take a new interest in it. The only time I ever had to be taken home in a cab was the day after I promised to sign the pledge," and the bachelor sighed reminiscently.

"And the only time I ever over-

drew my bank account," declared the widow, "was the day after I had resolved to economize. I suppose," she added pensively, "that the best way to begin would be to pick out the worst vice and discard that."

"And that will leave heaps of room for the others and for a lot of new little sins, besides, won't it?" agreed the bachelor cheerfully. "Well," he added philosophically, "I'll give up murdering."

"What!" The widow started.

"Don't you want me to?" asked the bachelor plaintively, rubbing his bald spot. "Or perhaps I might resolve not to commit highway robbery any more, or to stop forging, or——"

"All of which is so easy!" broke in the widow sarcastically.

"There'd be some glory and some

reason in giving up a big vice," sighed the bachelor, "if a fellow had one. But the trouble is that most of us men haven't any big criminal tendencies, merely a heap of little follies and weaknesses that there isn't any particular virtue in sacrificing or any particular harm in keeping."

"And which you always do keep, in spite of all your New Year's vows," remarked the widow ironically.

"Huh!" The bachelor laughed cynically. "It's our New Year's vows that help us to keep 'em. The very fact that a fellow has sworn to forego anything, whether it's a habit or a girl, makes it more attractive. I've thrown away a whole box of cigars with the finest intentions in the world and then gotten up in the

middle of the night to fish the pieces out of the waste basket. And that midnight smoke was the sweetest I ever had. It was sweeter than the apples I stole when I was a kid and than the kisses I stole when——"

"If you came here to dilate on the joys of sin, Mr. Travers," began the widow coldly.

"And," proceeded the bachelor, "I've made up my mind to stop flirting with a girl, because I found out that she was beginning to—to——"

"I understand," interrupted the widow sympathetically.

"And by jove!" finished the bachelor, "I had to restrain myself to keep from going back and proposing to her!"

"How lucky you did!" commented the widow witheringly.

"But I wouldn't have," explained the bachelor ruefully, "if the girl had restrained herself."

"Nevertheless," repeated the widow, "is was lucky—for the girl."

"Which girl?" asked the bachelor. "The girl I broke off with or the girl that came afterward?"

"I suppose," mused the widow, ignoring the levity and leaning over to arrange a bunch of violets at her belt, "that is why it is so difficult for a man to keep a promise or a vow—even a marriage vow."

"Oh, I don't know." The bachelor leaned back and regarded the widow's coronet braid through the smoke from his cigar. "It isn't the marriage vows that are so difficult to keep. It's the fool vows a man makes before marriage and the fool

promises he makes afterward that he stumbles over and falls down on. The marriage vows are so big and vague that you can get all around them without actually breaking them, but if they should interpolate concrete questions into the service such as, 'Do you, William, promise not to growl at the coffee'——"

"Or 'Do you, Mary, promise never to put a daub of powder on your nose again?' " broke in the widow.

"Nor to look twice at your pretty stenographer," continued the bachelor.

"Nor to lie about your age, or your foot or your waist measure."

"Nor to juggle with the truth whenever you stay out after half past ten."

"Nor to listen to things that—that

anybody—except your husband—may say to you in the conservatory—oh, I see how it feels!" finished the widow with a sympathetic little shudder.

"And yet," reflected the bachelor, "a woman is always exacting vows and promises from the man she loves, always putting up bars—for him to jump over; when if she would only leave him alone he would be perfectly contented to stay within bounds and graze in his own pasture. A man hates being pinned down; but a woman doesn't want anything around that she can't pin down, from her belt and her theories to her hat and her husband."

"Well," protested the widow, studying the toe of her slipper, "it is a satisfaction to know you've got

your husband fastened on straight by his promises and held in place by his vows and that he loves you enough to——"

"Usually," interrupted the bachelor, "a man loves you in inverse ratio to his protestations. The lover who promises all things without reserve is too often like the fellow who doesn't question the hotel bill nor ask the price of the wine, because he doesn't intend to pay it anyway. The fellow who is prodigal with vows and promises and poetry is generally the one to whom such things mean nothing and, being of no value, can be flung about generously to every girl he meets. The firm with the biggest front office is likely to be the one with the smallest deposit in the safe. The man who swears off loudest on New

Year's is usually the one they have to carry home the morning after. And the chap who promises a girl a life of roses is the one who will let her pick all the thorns off for herself."

"Perhaps," sighed the widow, chewing the stem of a violet thoughtfully, "the best way to cure a man of a taste for anything, after all, is to let him have too much of it, instead of making him swear off. If you want him to hate the smell of a pipe insist on his smoking one all the time. If you want him to sign the temperance pledge serve him wine with every course. If you want him to hate a woman invite her to meet him every time he calls, and tell him how 'suitable' she would be."

"And if you want him to love you," finished the bachelor, "don't ask him

to swear it, but tell him that he really ought not to. The best way to manage a donkey—human or otherwise—is to turn his head in the wrong direction, and he'll back in the right one."

"Then," said the widow decisively, "we ought to begin the New Year by making some irresolutions."

"Some—what?"

"Vows that we won't stop doing the things we ought not to do," explained the widow.

"All right," agreed the bachelor thoughtfully, "I'll make an irresolution to go on making love to you as much as I like."

"You mean as much as I like, Mr. Travers," corrected the widow severely.

"How much do you like?" asked

the bachelor, leaning over to look into the widow's eyes.

The widow kicked the corner of the rug tentatively.

"I like—all but the proposing," she said slowly. "You really ought to stop that——"

"I'm going to stop it—to-night," said the bachelor firmly.

The widow looked up in alarm.

"Oh, you don't have to commence keeping your resolutions until tomorrow morning," she said quickly.

"And you are going to stop refusing me—to-night," continued the bachelor firmly.

The widow studied the corner of the rug with great concern.

"And," went on the bachelor, taking something from his pocket and toying with it thoughtfully, "you are

"OH don't. In a moment we'll be making promises."

going to put on this ring"—he leaned over, caught the widow's hand and slipped the glittering thing on her third finger. "Now," he began, "you are going to say that you will——"

The widow sprang up suddenly.

"Oh, don't, don't, don't!" she cried. "In a moment we'll be making promises."

"We don't need to," said the bachelor, leaning back nonchalantly, "we can begin by making—arrangements. Would you prefer to live in town or at Tuxedo? And do you think Europe or Bermuda the best place for the——"

"Bermuda, by all means," broke in the widow, "and I wish you'd have that hideous portico taken off your town house, Billy, and——" But the rest of her words were smothered in

the bachelor's coat lapel—and something else.

"Then you do mean to marry me, after all?" cried the bachelor triumphantly.

The widow gasped for breath and patted her hair anxiously.

"I—I meant to marry you all the time!" she cried, "But I never thought you were really in earnest and——"

" 'Methinks'," quoted the bachelor happily, " 'that neither of us did protest too much.' We haven't made any promises, you know."

"Not one," rejoined the widow promptly, "as to my flirting."

"Nor as to my clubs."

"Nor as to my relatives."

"Nor my cigars."

"And we won't make any vows,"

cried the widow, "except marriage vows."

"And New Year's irresolutions," added the bachelor.

"Listen," cried the widow softly, with her fingers on her lips.

A peal of a thousand silver bells rang out on the midnight air.

"The chimes!" exclaimed the widow. "They're full of promises!"

"I thought it sounded like a wedding bell," said the bachelor, disappointedly.

"Maybe," said the widow, "it was only Love—ringing off."

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